

# **Iowa Blueprint for Change**

## **2024 Local Evaluation**

### **End of Year Annual Performance Report (EOYAPR)**

*Submitted to:*

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<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Acronyms Used in this Report Definition</b>
<b>ADHD</b>	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
<b>APR</b>	Annual Performance Report
<b>APSE</b>	Association of People Supporting Employment First
<b>ASK Resources</b>	Access for Special Kids
<b>CARF</b>	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
<b>CDC</b>	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<b>CE</b>	Customized Employment
<b>CEA</b>	Center for Evaluation and Assessment
<b>CEBH</b>	Center for Emotional and Behavioral Health
<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations
<b>CIE</b>	Competitive Integrated Employment
<b>COP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>CRP</b>	Community Rehabilitation Program
<b>DAY HAB</b>	Day Habilitation Program
<b>DD</b>	Developmental Disabilities
<b>DEI</b>	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
<b>DIF</b>	Disability Innovation Fund
<b>DOL</b>	Department of Labor
<b>DSP</b>	Direct Support Professional
<b>DSR</b>	Discovery Staging Record
<b>EOYR</b>	End of Year Report
<b>E1st</b>	Employment First
<b>FFY</b>	Federal Fiscal Year
<b>FTE</b>	Full-Time Equivalent
<b>GHA</b>	Griffin-Hammis Associates
<b>HHS</b>	Health and Human Services
<b>IBC</b>	Iowa Blueprint for Change
<b>ICIE</b>	Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment
<b>IPS</b>	Individual Placement and Support
<b>IRB</b>	Institutional Review Board

<b>IRSS</b>	Iowa Rehabilitation Services System
<b>JC</b>	Job Candidate
<b>MCO</b>	Managed Care Organization
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>PA</b>	Pre-Apprenticeship
<b>RA</b>	Registered Apprenticeship
<b>RSA</b>	Rehabilitation Services Administration
<b>SCL</b>	Supported Community Living
<b>SMW</b>	Subminimum Wage
<b>SWTCIE</b>	Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance
<b>UCEDD</b>	University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
<b>UI</b>	University of Iowa
<b>VODEC</b>	Vocational Development Center, Inc.
<b>WIOA</b>	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
<b>14C</b>	Certificate allowing subminimum wage employment for individuals with disabilities

## Section 2. Executive Summary (IBC Evaluation)

### Program Purpose

The Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC) project is designed to promote Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) as the expected and achievable outcome for Iowans with disabilities. Through a collective impact framework, the project brings together state agencies, service providers, and stakeholders to align efforts, resources, and policies that support inclusive employment pathways. The program emphasizes shared vision, coordinated strategies, and data-driven decision-making to transform how employment services are delivered across the state.

### Background

IBC is led by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and supported by a coalition of partners including the University of Iowa Center for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA). In its third year, the project continued to build infrastructure for sustainable systems change. Key developments included the launch of the Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship program, the refinement of fidelity-based service models for Customized Employment (CE) and Individual Placement and Support (IPS), and the expansion of youth transition pilots. The project also prioritized modernization of data systems, stakeholder engagement, and accessibility improvements to ensure equitable participation and impact.

### Findings

During the reporting period from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025, IBC demonstrated measurable progress towards project outcomes. Partners advanced shared messaging through tools like the Employment First Guidebook and coordinated funding strategies via the NEON pilot and VR Waiver Flowchart. The transition to the inFormed case management system marked a significant step toward improved data tracking and service coordination. Evaluation activities—including stakeholder surveys, participant interviews, focus groups, and project closure and enrollment data—showed evidence of increased demand for CIE, greater clarity around fidelity standards, and strengthened collaboration among service providers. The project evaluation team, in collaboration with IVRS, also addressed challenges related to data inconsistencies and accessibility by revising protocols, enhancing training, and improving dashboard usability. The enhanced training for VR counselors was implemented in direct response to evaluation findings that identified data entry errors and inconsistencies in service tracking. These adjustments, along with IVRS's decision to modernize its case management system and launch a stakeholder newsletter, were guided by stakeholder survey feedback highlighting gaps in coordination, communication, and transparency. Overall, IBC has laid a strong foundation for statewide replication of effective practices and continues to drive progress toward inclusive employment for all Iowans with disabilities. In Year 4, continued attention to strengthening communication across service roles, improving data quality, and supporting fidelity in CE and IPS implementation will be important to sustaining momentum and deepening impact.

## Iowa Blueprint for Change 2025 Annual Performance Report

### Section 3. Grant Performance Narrative

#### 3.1. Major project Evaluation Activities and Progress Made, in Accordance with Project Evaluation Plan for the Reporting Period (October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025).

- a) Project Activities, Outputs, and Products. Describe major project activities, outputs, and products (e.g., toolkits, curricula, conferences, etc.) completed during the reporting period, as applicable.*

Refer to the 2025 IVRS EOYAPR for detailed updates about project activities, outputs, and products completed during this project period.

- b) Outcomes: Describe the significant project outcomes and milestones achieved for this reporting period.*

The narrative below describes project outcomes and milestones achieved during this reporting period.

#### Evidence of Progress Towards Short-Term Outcomes

##### *a) Demonstration of CI tenets*

The tenets of collective impact are: a common agenda (shared vision and goals), shared measurement (aligned data and metrics), mutually reinforcing activities (coordinated and unique partner contributions), continuous communication (building trust through open dialogue), and a backbone organization (dedicated team to coordinate efforts).

##### 1. Common Agenda:

The common agenda is a core tenet of the collective impact framework, requiring that all partners develop a shared understanding of the problem and align their efforts toward a unified vision for change. Within Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC), this vision centers on advancing CIE as the expected and achievable outcome for Iowans with disabilities.

Over the past year, IBC partners have made steady progress in building shared language and goals to advance this vision. A central component of this effort has been intentional work to shift the employment narrative across multiple levels of the service system. For example, the 2024 release of the *Employment First Guidebook* was developed to help caregivers better understand the benefits of CIE and to encourage job candidates to pursue community-based employment. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is now updating this resource to reflect new funding streams and service models, with the updated edition planned for release by the end of 2025. This messaging work has been reinforced by feedback from VR counselors, who report gradual but meaningful shifts in caregiver and job seeker mindsets.

During this period, the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) initiative contributed towards a shared agenda for Iowa-wide efforts to achieve CIE, opening new pathways towards systems-level change. In December 2024, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) received one of 14 national NEON awards to support state efforts to expand pathways to CIE. Through this award, Iowa focused on transforming funding structures and policies for Day Habilitation services and on developing training modules for Benefits Liaisons to better support youth with disabilities. From December 2024 through August 2025,

HHS collaborated with IVRS's IBC project to braid and sequence funding for IBC registered apprenticeships and Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Day Habilitation and Supported Employment services. This pilot project was designed to strengthen service coordination, enhance workforce inclusion, and expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to achieve CIE. The pilot continues to operate, and if collaboration is sustained among providers, funders, and employers, the model may be scaled statewide in the future.

Feedback on the 2025 Stakeholder Survey further reflects progress in building shared understanding across the system. Respondents described how their participation in the Collective has expanded their professional networks, increased opportunities to collaborate across agencies, and improved their understanding of how different roles fit within the broader employment system. Many reported gaining practical tools and strategies to better align service delivery with the project's employment vision. Others emphasized that the Collective has helped elevate conversations about funding, advocacy, and service design—indicating that shared messaging is beginning to shape how organizations approach CIE beyond their own programs.

At the same time, Collective attendees identified areas where alignment could be strengthened. Out of 38 item responses, 12 expressed interest in more consistent communication, including regular project updates, transparent progress reporting, and the revival of newsletters to keep the field informed. Others ( $n = 8$ ) highlighted the need for clearer guidance on sustainable practices and system-level strategies that reinforce shared goals across service settings.

Feedback from mentors, VR counselors, and employment specialists echoed these themes. Mentors shared the forms of support that have been particularly helpful in enabling them to provide effective guidance. Examples of related supports mentioned were system-level stability and improvement—such as ongoing training despite budget constraints, enhanced understanding of fidelity expectations, and the flexibility to adjust practices to meet standards—which helped ensure a common agenda for service delivery.

VR counselors observed gradual changes in how families view employment opportunities, even as workforce capacity remains a challenge. Employment specialists described IBC as a positive driver of CIE outcomes, though perceptions of impact varied by service context—IPS specialists ( $n = 2$ ) were more likely to report significant gains, whereas CE specialists ( $n = 2$ ) described more modest increases.

Overall, these developments are supporting evidence that IBC has established a strong foundation for a common agenda, supported by efforts to align funding strategies, create opportunities for shared messaging, and to develop an infrastructure that supports collaboration. Continued investment in communication, shared learning, and systems change efforts—such as the NEON pilot—will continue to be important to deepen this alignment and sustain progress toward a statewide CIE vision.

## **2. Shared Measurement Systems:**

Over the past year, partners have made meaningful progress toward developing a shared measurement system that strengthens coordination, data consistency, and accountability in advancing CIE outcomes.

One key accomplishment has been the continued reporting of project data through IRSS to support propensity score matching and measure the impact of the initiative. These shared data



efforts provide a common foundation for evaluating progress and informing decision-making across partners.

In direct response to stakeholder feedback from the 2024 Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC) Stakeholder Survey, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is taking steps to modernize its data infrastructure. Both VR counselors and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) identified a need for improved coordination and communication to support the efficiency and effectiveness of IBC-related services. To address this, IVRS is leveraging SWTCIE DIF funds to replace its outdated case management system with inFormed, a modern, cloud-based platform provided by Libera. Implementation will occur in two phases, with Phase 1 focused on launching a vendor portal to expedite the exchange of authorizations, billing, and supporting documentation. This new system is designed to enhance secure information sharing, automate routine processes, and streamline workflows. The targeted go-live date for Phase 1 is October 2026.

In parallel, GHA is working to streamline data collection and reporting for CE. This work responds to counselor feedback that current reporting requirements under DIF IBC are intensive and sometimes duplicative. By improving data flow and reducing redundancies, this effort aims to make reporting more efficient and strengthen the overall shared measurement system.

### **3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities:**

Partners continued to advance Iowa's shared vision for expanding access to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) through coordinated and complementary activities that leverage the strengths of each organization. Rather than working in isolation, partners are aligning strategies, sharing resources, and developing practical tools that make it easier to turn Employment First principles into real outcomes for Iowans with disabilities.

One major collaborative effort has been the development and ongoing refinement of the Iowa Employment First Guidebook, originally published in July 2024 and scheduled for an updated release by the end of 2025. The guidebook is designed to provide case managers, care managers, service coordinators, and integrated health home care coordinators with practical information, resources, and tools to support people with disabilities in achieving CIE.

The guidebook was developed in partnership with Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), and Center for Disabilities and Development at The University of Iowa, with support from the Iowa Blueprint for Change. Additional contributors included Iowa Department for the Blind, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council, Easterseals Assistive Technology Center, ASK Resource Center, Disability Rights Iowa, Iowa APSE, Griffin-Hammis Associates, Wellpoint, Iowa Total Care, and Molina Healthcare.

The guidebook covers major topics to push the Employment First initiative, including myth-busting common misconceptions about disability and employment, mapping out Iowa's employment support infrastructure, and outlining strategies for how providers can encourage and support individuals to pursue CIE. By consolidating this information into a single resource, partners have created a practical tool that strengthens consistency and alignment across agencies.

In 2025, National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) released the Iowa Policy and System Review on Benefits Planning for Transitioning Youth and Their Families, a



written pipeline that outlines steps for moving individuals from Day Habilitation to CIE. Although this work was led outside of the IBC initiative, it aligns closely with IBC’s Year 4 focus on strengthening transition pilots and establishing youth services within Individual Placement and Support (IPS).

Similarly, Iowa has invested in DB101, an online benefits planning resource designed to support individuals, families, and professionals in understanding how work and benefits interact. The adult site is expected to fully launch in December 2025, further reinforcing statewide efforts to make employment pathways more accessible and navigable.

Later, in August 2025, IBC partnered with HHS under NEON to release the VR Waiver Flowchart, “Braiding and Sequencing for Iowa Blueprint for Change Registered Apprenticeships, Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Day Habilitation and Supported Employment Services.” This resource provides an example of how programs can coordinate funding to better support employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

The flowchart builds on a 2023 funding agreement between IVRS and HHS that outlines how VR and Medicaid services can be sequenced and shared: IVRS covers employment services for youth under age 24, while Medicaid funds medically necessary services if employment goals aren’t met or shift over time. This approach is already being used to connect individuals in Day Habilitation or Supported Employment services to Registered Apprenticeships—paid, industry-driven career pathways that combine classroom learning with on-the-job training.

By making it easier to braid funding streams and raise awareness of inclusive apprenticeship opportunities, this pilot lays the groundwork for sustainable, scalable employment pathways for people who have historically been left out of the workforce.

#### **4. Continuous Communication:**

In 2025, partners continued to work to strengthen communication channels through regular meetings, structured feedback loops, and new strategies designed to address identified gaps in information sharing.

Monthly Collective meetings were held from January through June 2025, with discussions centered on advancing Employment First efforts and coordinating around NEON initiatives. Monthly contract holder meetings were also held and provided an additional forum to ensure alignment across project contract holders, including IVRS, GHA, CEBH, and CEA.

Despite these regular touchpoints, results from the 2025 Stakeholder Survey revealed that many Collective attendees did not feel well-informed about evidence of project progress, contract holder activities, or data collection efforts. In response, the CEA is collaborating with IVRS and other contract holders to launch a monthly stakeholder newsletter, with the first issue set to be released at the end of October 2025. This newsletter will highlight recent activities, success stories, challenges, and upcoming priorities from each partner—including GHA CE mentors, CEBH IPS mentors, CEA, and IVRS—to ensure that all stakeholders have access to timely and consistent information.

Survey findings also shed light on how communication between VR counselors, CE mentors, and IPS fidelity mentors has changed over time. Compared to 2024, VR counselors reported higher levels of inclusion and collaboration with CE mentors and employment specialists. For example, in CE coordination, the share of VR counselors who felt “mostly” or “very” included

increased from 10% in 2024 to 50% in 2025, while those rating overall collaboration as “good” rose from 40% to 75%.

Within IPS, more counselors reported that meeting frequency with fidelity mentors “mostly” or “completely” supported their needs (up from 25% in 2024 to 50% in 2025). Perceived inclusion and collaboration in IPS coordination also showed modest improvements, with fewer respondents reporting “not included” and more indicating “mostly” or “very” included. Familiarity with IPS standards increased as well: 75% of VR counselors reported being moderately familiar in 2025 compared to 56% in 2024.

Mentors also reported stable or improved communication frequency and quality with key roles, including CRP leadership, VR counselors, and employment specialists. While communication frequency with the IVRS contract team varied by respondent—ranging from “much less” to “much more”—the quality of those interactions was either maintained or improved. Notably, no respondents reported worsening communication quality with the IVRS team, and only one reported slightly worse communication with employment specialists.

### **5. Backbone Support:**

The IBC Backbone entity was restructured during this reporting period, with IVRS assuming the role of backbone agency as of September 30, 2024. This shift allowed the initiative to establish a more centralized and coordinated structure for strategic direction, infrastructure, and operational support.

As the backbone organization, IVRS has taken on responsibility for convening and facilitating meetings that drive the work forward. From January through June 2025, IVRS organized monthly Collective meetings in partnership with ExploreVR (Institute for Community Inclusion, UMASS Boston) to advance Employment First efforts and align activities with NEON initiatives. After this initial series, the agency transitioned to hosting bi-monthly Collective meetings. IVRS also coordinates monthly contractor meetings and monthly Steering Committee meetings to sustain engagement, maintain shared priorities, and monitor implementation progress.

An additional component of IVRS’s backbone role is guiding the development of the Iowa Blueprint, which serves as a strategic framework to scale and replicate project activities statewide. To support this work, IVRS contracted the CEA to lead the development of the Blueprint. Because the data collection overlaps closely with local evaluation activities, this partnership enables the team to integrate relevant data in real time and provide formative feedback during the development of new components. While CEA leads drafting and data integration, IVRS provides strategic direction on the focus of micro blueprints and reviews all content to ensure accuracy and thoroughness.

IVRS also advanced efforts related to the Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program, finalizing program competencies and enrolling the first participant on August 1, 2025. The agency plans to expand outreach in Year 4 to increase participation and to develop pre-apprenticeship competencies that will provide transition-age youth with a pathway to stackable credentials and career advancement in the field.

To strengthen transition pathways for youth with disabilities, IVRS contracted directly with the Waterloo and Linn-Mar school districts to provide CE services. Direct contracting has allowed

for better coordination, improved alignment with district needs, and more responsive access to providers. Transition curricula are scheduled for finalization in Year 4, with pilots continuing to build on Year 3 progress. IVRS also plans to launch a Youth IPS pilot program during Year 4 to further support uninterrupted transitions from school to employment for youth with mental health disabilities.

As part of its backbone responsibilities, IVRS also facilitated the release of the “VR Waiver Flowchart: Braiding and Sequencing for Iowa Blueprint for Change Registered Apprenticeships, Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Day Habilitation and Supported Employment Services” in August 2025, in partnership with NEON. The flowchart demonstrates how VR and Medicaid funding streams can be coordinated to support individuals with significant disabilities, including connecting participants to Registered Apprenticeships that combine classroom learning with paid on-the-job training. IVRS plans to update the flowchart by the end of 2025 to reflect Medicaid changes and to disseminate the guide broadly, including through the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM).

#### ***b) Completion of RA and PA programs***

In Year 3, IVRS finalized the RA program competencies, which outline the training and experiences required for participants. The curriculum includes 16 hours of ACRE training, job coaching, mandatory reporter training, HCBS training, VR-specific trainings, and additional modules covering topics such as ethics and confidentiality, serving individuals with significant disabilities, and traumatic brain injury (TBI) awareness.

Completion of the RA provides participants with the credentials and skills to serve as a basic job coach, with opportunities for further specialized training to support Customized Employment (CE), Individual Placement and Support (IPS), or transition services. To incentivize skill acquisition and advancement, an apprentice wage schedule was established: participants start at \$15 per hour, reach \$16 per hour upon achieving 13 competencies, and \$17 per hour after completing 26 competencies. The first RA participant enrolled on August 1, 2025.

Looking ahead, Year 4 will focus on developing pre-apprenticeship programs targeted to transition-aged youth. These programs will provide foundational training and experience, creating a pipeline into the RA program and ultimately supporting the development of skilled job coaches who can facilitate competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

#### ***c) Increase in the number of Iowans with disabilities in CIE***

Since last year, CEA and IVRS teams have clarified how DIF participation is defined and how it factors into program counts. In the past, individuals who were identified as DIF participants but did not have IPS or CE authorizations were still included in program participation totals. Because these individuals represent closed cases with no authorized IBC services, they are no longer counted in program frequencies.

This change improves the accuracy of how we track the number of people who actually participated in the program, rather than those who were only considered potential DIF participants before their cases were closed. It would not be accurate to count these individuals as IBC closures since they never received DIF services. As a result, FY2024 frequencies have been recalculated to align with the approach used in FY2025 data.

In Q4 of FY2024, there were 5 closed IPS cases with a CIE outcome and 1 closed IBC CE case with a CIE outcome, for a total of 6 closed cases.

As of the Q3 DIF data report for FY2025, there were 14 closed IPS cases with a CIE outcome and 4 closed CE cases with CIE outcomes, for a total of 18 closed cases.

***d) Increase in the number of unrepresented participants in CIE***

IBC staff have until October 10 to backdate data into the IRSS system, so at the time of this report, Y3Q3 are the most recent data available. These data were used to track program enrollment and outcomes. Of the 18 case closures in Y3Q3, some were from underrepresented groups. The demographics of these cases are reflected below.

**Race**

- Asian: 2 (IBC IPS)
- Black: 1 (IBC CE)
- White: 15 (IBC CE: 3; IBC IPS: 12)

**Ethnicity**

- No closed cases are from Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

**Geography**

- Rural: 12 (IBC IPS)
- Urban: 6 (IBC CE: 4; IBC IPS: 2)

**Number of Serious Limitations**

- Three: 2 (IBC IPS)
- Four: 1 (IBC IPS)

**Waitlist Category**

- Most Significantly Disabled: 100%

**Primary Diagnosis Impairment**

- Hearing loss, primary communication visual: 1 (IBC IPS)
- Manipulation, dexterity, orthopedic, or neurological impairments: 1 (IBC IPS)
- Cognitive impairments: 3 (IBC CE: 2; IBC IPS: 1)
- Psychosocial impairments: 13 (IBC CE: 2; IBC IPS: 11)

***e) Alignment of policies, funding, and practices with E1st and tech 1<sup>st</sup>***

In Year 3, the initiative continued to advance the alignment of policies, funding, and service practices to support E1st and Tech1<sup>st</sup> principles, ensuring competitive integrated employment (CIE) remains the preferred outcome for Iowans with disabilities. IVRS and partners also focused on coordinating public funding streams, embedding best practices into workforce development, and strengthening service delivery across CE, IPS, and transition programs.

One Y3 milestone was the release of the VR Waiver Flowchart under the NEON partnership, which demonstrates how VR and Medicaid funding can be braided to support employment services, particularly for youth under age 24. This tool complements IBC efforts, allowing providers to plan and sequence services more efficiently while promoting sustained access to CIE. IVRS plans to update the flowchart later this year to reflect Medicaid changes and to share it with broader audiences, including the NCRTM.

Workforce alignment was also advanced through the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program. Competencies and training were finalized, and the first participant enrolled in August 2025. This program supports participants in becoming skilled job coaches and establishes wage progression tied to competencies, reinforcing a career pathway approach consistent with E1st. Pre-apprenticeship programs planned for Year 4 will extend these opportunities to transition-aged youth, creating a structured pipeline into CIE-aligned employment.

Under Technology First, IVRS established a contract with Easterseals Iowa effective October 1, 2025, to support the state's designation as a Tech1st state. This short-term contract aims to explore tools and strategies that could enhance transition sites and expand access to assistive technology for youth and adults with disabilities. In alignment with Iowa's two-year modifications to the Unified State Plan, the initiative is prioritizing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to strengthen service delivery. IVRS hopes that these Tech1st efforts will advance the IBC goal of increasing access to assistive technology and AI-supported tools at transition sites, directly connecting state policy priorities with innovations in practice that support competitive integrated employment.

***f) Increased demand for CIE by individuals with disabilities and their families***

Evidence from the 2025 IBC stakeholder survey and program enrollment data indicates growing demand for CIE among individuals with disabilities and their families. Out of 14 VR counselors responding to the survey, 57% reported observing at least some positive change in job candidates' motivation to pursue CIE (slight: 4; moderate: 2; significant: 2), and 36% reported observing positive changes in caregivers' mindsets toward CIE (moderate: 4; significant: 1). Enrollment data for IBC services also reflect increased participation over time. Baseline data from Q4 of 2024 showed 47 IBC CE enrollments and 48 IBC IPS enrollments. CE enrollment remained steady at 47 in Q1 2025 (0% increase), then rose to 61 in Q2 (30% increase from baseline) and 66 in Q3 (40% increase). IPS enrollment rose from 50 in Q1 (4% increase from baseline) to 64 in Q2 (33% increase) and 65 in Q3 (35% increase). These trends demonstrate that more individuals are engaging with IBC services that support CIE. Figure 1 displays these changes over time.

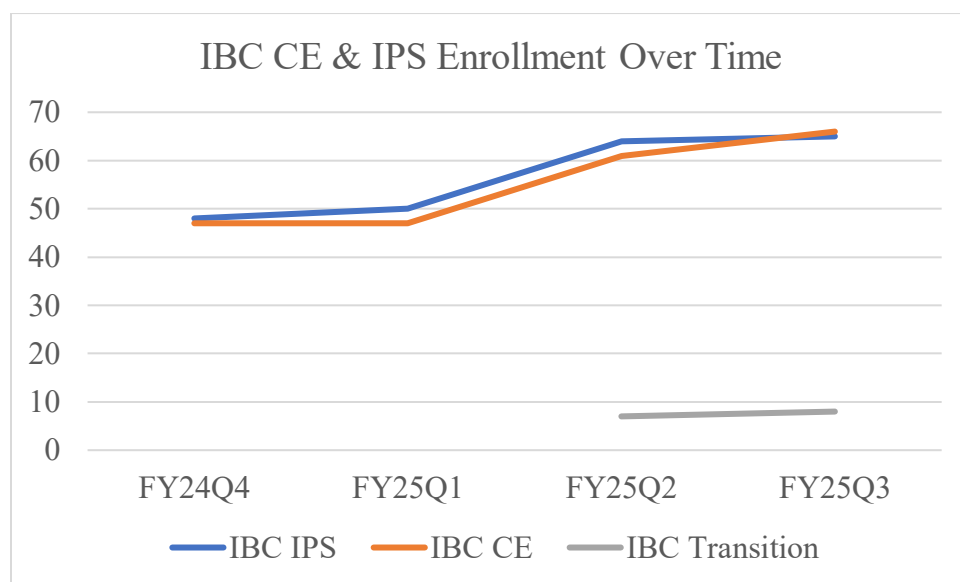


Figure 1. IBC Program Enrollment Over Time

**g) Increased demonstration of fidelity in CE and IPS**

While GHA collects and reviews performance data to assess provider adherence to CE fidelity standards and CEBH does the same for IPS, the stakeholder survey complements these efforts by capturing *stakeholder perceptions* of fidelity—specifically, their familiarity with and views on the feasibility of implementing key fidelity components. These perceptions are important indicators of implementation capacity and readiness and provide meaningful context for understanding trends in fidelity demonstration over time. In this section, survey findings are used to illustrate how stakeholders understand and experience these standards in practice.

Both CE and IPS have established fidelity standards to guide consistent, high-quality implementation. CE fidelity encompasses three phases: Discovery (typically 3–6 months), Customized Job Development (around 3 months), and Job Coaching (post-placement). Discovery involves home visits, interviews with people connected to the job candidate, neighborhood mapping, and skill exploration. Customized Job Development focuses on creating employment opportunities aligned with the candidate’s skills and interests, while Job Coaching supports skill-building and workplace success after placement.

According to the 2025 stakeholder survey, most VR counselors (5 of 8) reported being slightly or moderately familiar with CE fidelity standards, with only one counselor with more than two years of project experience reporting they were very familiar. Counselors generally found the 3–6 month Discovery phase mostly feasible (5 of 8), with more counselors at the group-level (that is, considering all respondents to each year’s survey, not just those who completed both years) finding the timeline feasible compared to 2024. Ratings for the 3-month Customized Job Development (2 mostly feasible, 3 somewhat feasible, 2 slightly feasible, 1 not sure) and 90-day Job Coaching phases (3 somewhat feasible, 1 mostly feasible, 2 slightly feasible, 1 not feasible, 1 not sure) were more mixed, indicating that these stages remain challenging regardless of



counselor tenure. Because there were six counselors who responded to these items from 2024 and 2025, we were able to track individual-level changes as well. At the individual-level, most (4 out of 6) counselors reported that the timeline for the Discovery phase is more feasible than they originally reported in 2024; almost all (5 out of 6) reported that customized job development is more feasible than they did in 2024; and nearly all (5 out of 6) reported that job coaching is more feasible than they did in 2024. Overall, trends suggest that counselor familiarity and perceived feasibility increase with IBC project experience, where most or nearly all reported increased feasibility for each of the stages of customized employment compared to 2024.

Employment specialists' clarity around CE fidelity standards overall was reported as either completely clear (2), mostly clear (1), or somewhat clear (1). Two shared ways they felt like their clarity could be improved; one felt there are many fidelity standards and not enough time to provide CE services, while another felt that they could gain additional understanding about mental health challenges and how to support them.

For IPS, most VR counselors (6 of 8) reported moderate familiarity with IPS fidelity standards in 2025, with one counselor with more than two years of project experience indicating they were not familiar at all. In 2024, three counselors reported not being familiar and five reported moderate familiarity. Because different counselors responded to each year's survey, these findings reflect group-level trends rather than individual-level changes. Nonetheless, the data suggest modest gains in overall familiarity with IPS fidelity standards over time.

Specialists providing IPS reported complete confidence in service delivery (5). Most (5 out of 8) felt completely clear about their specific role in the IBC project; two felt mostly clear, and one felt somewhat clear. Those who felt mostly or somewhat clear shared that they can gain clarity by knowing where their time is most needed, "what the project itself is about", and "how to authentically explore career options for the client that feels genuine and helpful for the client to understand their purpose."

Feedback from CE mentors further suggests a general improvement in providers' demonstration of fidelity over the course of the project. Mentors described varied levels of performance across the employment specialists they support—some meeting or exceeding most expectations, and others still working toward consistency. In the survey, it was mentioned that there has been overall progress in understanding fidelity requirements and increased willingness among providers to adjust their service practices to align with best practice standards. This growing clarity has strengthened training and mentoring efforts and has been further supported by the launch of the CE Portal.

#### ***h) Development of an infrastructure to support training, TA, and fidelity for CE and IPS***

In Year 3, IVRS finalized the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) competencies and opened the RA program for enrollment. These competencies define the training and experiences required for participants, including 16 hours of ACRE training, job coaching, mandatory reporter training, HCBS training, VR-specific trainings, and additional modules covering ethics and confidentiality, serving individuals with significant disabilities, and traumatic brain injury



awareness. Completion of the RA provides participants with the credentials and skills to serve as basic job coaches, with opportunities for further specialized training to support Customized Employment (CE), Individual Placement and Support (IPS), or transition services. Year 4 will focus on pre-apprenticeship programs for transition-aged youth, creating a pipeline into the RA program and supporting the development of skilled job coaches to facilitate competitive integrated employment.

As part of building a sustainable mentorship infrastructure, at least three employment specialists have expressed interest in serving as CE mentors. This will help ensure continuity of services and support beyond the grant period. The CE portal launched by GHA has further strengthened infrastructure by improving communication with providers and contract holders, supporting CE time tracking, and increasing clarity around performance on fidelity standards throughout the mentoring process. Providers report that the portal has enhanced their ability to provide effective training and mentoring to staff.

For IPS, feedback to the 2025 stakeholder survey highlighted that the ability to provide on-site technical assistance and fidelity monitoring through IBC has been greatly appreciated. With other budget cuts potentially limiting resources, the ongoing support from IBC ensures that providers continue to receive the training and TA necessary to maintain fidelity in their IPS programs.

Finally, providers have noted that IBC reporting can be intensive, and there have been some inconsistencies in entering CE data. GHA is working on strategies to streamline data entry requirements in Year 4 to improve efficiency and support fidelity monitoring.

*c) **Project Evaluation Progress: Describe the major project evaluation activities and progress made, in accordance with your project evaluation plan for this reporting period.***

**Progress. Describe the evidence that suggests, indicates, and demonstrates that the project is making progress.**

***Objectives 1.a–1.b (Meetings)***

Throughout the reporting period (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025), the evaluation team maintained regular engagement with IVRS program leadership and other key stakeholders through a series of recurring meetings designed to support coordination, feedback, and continuous improvement. These meetings—**18 Local Evaluator Meetings, 8 Collective Meetings, 8 Contract Holder and Contractor Convening meetings, 4 Data Management Meetings**, and **other coordination meetings** with Mathematica, RSA, Workforce Development, and mentors—served as the foundation for consistent communication and collaborative decision-making across the evaluation.

**Local Evaluator Meetings** were the primary venue for planning and coordinating evaluation activities, such as participant interviews, qualitative analyses, the development of the Day Habilitation Micro-Blueprint, and the development of a data dashboard to share project enrollment and CIE outcome data with stakeholders. These meetings provided a structured space to seek guidance from VR, discuss project challenges (e.g., outreach barriers, case management transitions, and data inconsistencies), and align evaluation deliverables with program needs.

Feedback from these sessions directly informed refinements to data protocols, the dashboard interface, and evaluation timelines.

Participation in **Collective Meetings** ensured the evaluation team remained connected to state-wide initiatives, including Employment First and the NEON project. During these meetings, presentations on Employment First highlighted statewide efforts to support Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and introduced related initiatives such as NEON. Through these discussions, the evaluation team connected with NEON representative Linn Nibbelink, whose insights helped inform the development of the Day Habilitation Micro-Blueprint. The evaluation team also used these meetings to share findings and updates with stakeholders and gather input on the IBC dashboard. Stakeholders provided feedback on the dashboard's layout and content—such as requests for clearer data visualizations and additional outcome details—which guided subsequent dashboard revisions and future updates.

The team also engaged regularly in **DIF Contract Holder and Contractor Convening meetings**, using these sessions to exchange updates with CE and IPS providers, address implementation challenges, and collect feedback on evaluation materials and methods. These interactions supported transparency, responsiveness, and alignment between evaluation goals and program operations.

**Data Management Meetings** served as a technical forum to identify and address data quality issues, refine inclusion rules, and improve the accuracy of analyses. Feedback from VR on data inconsistencies and accessibility helped shape updates to the IBC dashboard, ensuring that reporting tools were both accurate and user-friendly.

Finally, additional meetings with **Mathematica, RSA, Workforce Development, and CE/IPS mentors** provided opportunities to discuss evaluation coordination at both state and national levels, align local activities with federal measures, and strengthen protocols for participant recruitment and data collection.

#### ***Objectives 2.a–2.b (Annual Contractor Convening)***

The Annual Contractor Convening on 10/8 and 10/09/2024 provided a unique opportunity for the evaluation team to present Y2 evaluation activity findings and proposed Y3 activities while also obtaining contractor feedback on anticipated events. Key updates shared included findings from Y2 surveys and the commencement of data collection for propensity score matching, with initial data pulls in May and July 2024. Shared Y3 projections included piloting interview protocols, conducting participant interviews, analyzing interview findings, and preparing annual surveys.

#### ***Objectives 3.a–3.h (Annual Stakeholder Survey)***

During this reporting period (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025), the evaluation team developed, administered, and analyzed the 2025 Annual Stakeholder Survey to assess program implementation progress, identify ongoing barriers and facilitators, and capture stakeholder perspectives on collaboration and impact across IBC programs.

In collaboration with IVRS, the evaluation team refined the survey to reflect current project roles and priorities (Objective 3.a–3.b). Roles no longer active in implementation, such as Counselor Specialists, Coordinators, and CRP Supervisors/Directors, were removed, as there is no longer a counselor specialist role fulfilled under IBC, and the perspectives of supervisors and directors

were captured through other qualitative activities (interviews and focus groups). To reflect the growth of IPS mentorship under IBC, CEBH mentors were added as a new respondent group. The final stakeholder groups included Employment Specialists, GHA Mentors, CEBH Mentors, VR Counselors, and Collective Attendees. Although the team initially planned to include educators from CE pilot sites, this was deferred to FY 2026 to align with the ongoing redesign of the Transition CE program.

Following IVRS review and approval of the final survey instrument (Objective 3.c), the survey was disseminated via Qualtrics on August 1, 2025, to a distribution list jointly developed and verified by IVRS and the evaluation team. Four reminder emails were sent between August 6–13 (Objective 3.d), resulting in an overall response rate of 60% (94 of 156 recipients).

Survey responses were analyzed in September 2025 (Objective 3.e), and both a written report and infographic summarizing findings were submitted to IVRS on September 30, 2025 (Objective 3.f). The results highlighted key trends in collaboration, mentorship, and communication across IBC roles and identified opportunities to improve stakeholder engagement and information sharing.

In response to feedback from Collective members who felt they had limited awareness of project updates and progress, the evaluation team collaborated with IVRS to begin collecting monthly updates from contract holders and to develop a Collective newsletter that will share evaluation highlights and implementation updates (Objective 3.g). Survey findings will continue to be reviewed and discussed in upcoming Local Evaluator Meetings, and will be presented to the VR Leadership Team and the Collective to inform ongoing program implementation (Objective 3.h).

#### ***Objectives 4.a–4.c (Day Hab Focus Groups)***

After a literature and document review on the current understanding of Day Hab, its relationship with VR, and its role in supporting CIE efforts and VR feedback in Q1, the CEA developed and reviewed a focus group protocol and guidelines. The CEA team had discussions in May 2025 that improved understanding of the potentially disjointed nature of Day Hab and Supported Employment (SE) services. This understanding informed protocol revisions and the development of additional protocols for different CRP/Day Hab roles. Protocols we developed/refined in May include questions for the following roles: Day Hab staff, Day Hab supervisor/management roles, and CRP supervisors. The separation of roles was aimed at allowing for more targeted, relevant questions that reflect each group's unique responsibilities; encouraging deeper, more focused discussions during data collection; creating a safer space for Day Hab staff to share openly—particularly about sensitive topics like collaboration and communication within CRP; and helping reduce bias or social pressure that could arise if staff were asked to speak candidly in front of supervisory staff. The CEA received CRP supervisor contacts on 5/27 and began outreach on 6/3/2025.

Day Hab staff (DSP) focus groups were completed in July, with one additional Day Hab supervisor interview scheduled for early August. By the end of July, four CRP supervisor interviews had been completed, including one small group interview with three participants, for a total of six respondents. Two of these interviews were fully transcribed and summarized, with additional transcription and analysis continuing into the following months. One potential

participant opted not to meet and expressed interest in submitting written responses but did not follow through despite follow-up attempts.

Two DSP focus groups were also conducted in July: one at Hope Haven with four participants, and another at 43 North Iowa, where scheduling conflicts led to two separate interviews with two participants. All transcripts from CRP interviews and DSP focus groups were completed, and two of the five interview summaries were finalized and shared with CRP supervisors for review. During this time, the CEA also began qualitative inductive coding of participant interviews.

In August, one additional CRP supervisor interview was completed, bringing totals to seven supervisor sessions (five individual, one with three participants, and one with four participants) and three DSP sessions (two individual interviews and one group of four). In total, responses were collected from 18 participants across 10 sessions. All 10 interview summaries were completed, with nine submitted to CRP supervisors and DSPs for review in August and the final summary submitted in early September. The CEA also completed qualitative inductive coding and began drafting the findings report.

On 9/30/25, the CEA submitted the formal written report and corresponding infographic to IVRS for review. Findings will be discussed in upcoming Local Evaluator Meetings, including how results informed the Micro Blueprint, which has already undergone initial review by the IBC project director (see Objectives 8.a–8.c).

***Objectives 5.a–5.e and 6.a–6.e (Participant Interviews, Intervention & Control Groups)***

This year, the CEA completed a full cycle of participant interviews with individuals receiving IBC CE and IPS services, as well as with those in the control group receiving comparable supported employment services through VR. The control group interviews were added under a supplemental contract in October 2024 to complement the quantitative analyses being conducted through Objectives 10.a–10.d. Because the CEA is using propensity score matching to compare IBC and non-IBC participants on employment outcomes—specifically attainment of competitive integrated employment (CIE)—the addition of SE interviews provided important qualitative context for interpreting those data. Including both IBC and non-IBC perspectives allows the evaluation to compare participants’ experiences and identify how IBC implementation may contribute to stronger employment outcomes.

First, the CEA developed and finalized interview protocols for both employed and unemployed participants and established a coordinated outreach plan with IVRS and GHA. The CEA worked with VR staff to develop recruitment materials and outreach emails, which were sent to counselors and providers in December to introduce the interviews and outline expectations for participation. In January, the CEA followed up individually with counselors whose caseloads included eligible job candidates, providing participant background forms and guidance on recruitment. Counselors then contacted job candidates to gauge their interest in participating, and the CEA coordinated scheduling and consent processes based on their responses.

Interviews with IBC participants were then conducted via Zoom and, when needed, in person. RSA approval for participant incentives was received in March, allowing the CEA to distribute \$10 gift cards as a thank-you for participants’ time. Throughout the winter and early spring, the

CEA coordinated with counselors and employment specialists to complete interviews, gather background information, and begin transcription. By the end of April, interviews had been completed with 24 participants—7 in Supported Employment (SE), 9 in CE, and 8 in IPS.

Following data collection, the CEA transcribed all interviews and began qualitative analysis to identify key themes across groups. The analysis informed the development of both a written report and an infographic summarizing findings. A draft infographic was submitted to IVRS in July, and the CEA incorporated feedback from IVRS into a revised version. Initial findings were presented during a local evaluator meeting with the IVRS contract team on July 14, highlighting participant perspectives on employment goals, job satisfaction, benefits counseling, and the types of supports that made a difference in their employment outcomes.

In September, the CEA shared a broader presentation of findings with the Collective. The presentation described the final sample—25 participants in total (9 CE, 9 IPS, and 7 SE), including 15 who were employed, 8 who were not employed, and 2 pursuing postsecondary education—and summarized the major themes that emerged. Participants described how collaborative staff support, including the roles of employment specialists and counselors, helped them navigate challenges and stay motivated in their employment journeys. They also discussed their ideal jobs and interests as well as the jobs they obtained, which the CEA used to assess how closely their jobs aligned with their interests and needs. Other feedback shared included the importance of work in their lives and ongoing barriers such as limited hours, transportation, and concerns about losing benefits.

The CEA submitted the final written report and infographic to IVRS on September 30. These deliverables will inform program implementation discussions with the VR Leadership Team and the Collective as Iowa continues to refine CE and IPS services statewide.

### ***Objectives 7.a–7.c (Case Study)***

During the Local Evaluator meeting on 8/25/25, the CEA met with IVRS to review case study development efforts linked to the Micro Blueprint and Day Hab focus groups and interviews at three CRP pilot sites: Hope Haven, 43 North Iowa, and Imagine the Possibilities. To date, the CEA has drafted site profiles that will form the foundation for larger case studies of IBC pilot sites. These profiles are being used as a starting point in selecting case study candidates.

Case study selection will draw on participants' employment outcome data, prioritizing sites with the strongest records of successful CIE closures. Feedback from stakeholder surveys, CRP interviews and focus groups, and participant interviews will serve as supporting evidence in determining ideal candidates. The CEA will collaborate with the IVRS contract team, CEBH IPS mentors, and GHA CE mentors to finalize the selection.

To guide design and replication, the CEA is also reviewing case studies from the Collective Impact Forum<sup>1</sup>, which will inform how case studies are structured in Year 4 and ultimately summarized to support playbook/Blueprint development.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://collectiveimpactforum.org/blog/five-deep-dive-case-studies/>



***Objectives 8.a–8.c (Annual Blueprint)***

In Year 3, the evaluation team expanded its scope to include Blueprint development following a contract supplement signed in October 2024 (Quarter 1). This supplement transferred responsibility for developing annual Micro-Blueprints and a final Master Blueprint from UCEDD to the CEA, following partnership changes. Although the work was assigned in Quarter 1, active efforts began in April 2025 (Quarter 3), when a new evaluator joined the team to lead this component. These added responsibilities complemented the CEA’s ongoing evaluation work—particularly data collection and preparation for the final Year 5 Playbook—by ensuring that effective practices and lessons learned are captured in a sustainable format for statewide replication.

The new evaluator role, formally approved in October 2024, focused on leading the Micro-Blueprint and Master Blueprint initiative, coordinating with IVRS and key stakeholders, and translating evaluation findings into actionable strategies for implementation. Beginning in Quarter 3, the CEA, IVRS, and the IBC project director determined that the first Micro-Blueprint would center on the role of Day Habilitation and supported employment providers in promoting CIE.

To inform its development, the CEA conducted interviews and focus groups with CRP supervisors and Day Hab direct support professionals and reviewed existing IBC documentation and relevant literature. These sources provided insight into service delivery barriers, employment readiness strategies, and approaches for building Job Candidate portfolios that create a pipeline from Day Habilitation to CIE.

Throughout the process, the CEA shared updates during biweekly local evaluator meetings and presented preliminary findings and draft content at the September 2025 Collective meeting. Feedback from IVRS, the IBC project director, and Employment Policy Planner Linn Nibbelink, who provided input based on Iowa’s NEON project, informed refinements and ensured alignment with Employment First priorities.

The first Micro-Blueprint draft was submitted to IVRS on September 30, 2025, as a working document. It will continue to be revised and expanded in the next fiscal year, incorporating additional stakeholder feedback and data to guide the transition of Day Habilitation services toward CIE.

***Objectives 10.a–10.d (Propensity Score Analysis)***

This year, the CEA continued working with IVRS to strengthen data management practices and refine methods for propensity score matching. Early in the year, the team conducted matching on Year 2 Quarter 4 data and shared results at the December data management meeting. That review highlighted several data issues, including missing service authorizations, inconsistent closure notes, and county data errors. IVRS identified the causes of these inconsistencies, and those findings informed ongoing data cleaning and quality improvements.

In January, the CEA received and cleaned the Year 3 Quarter 1 DIF data in preparation for matching. Using these data, the team developed an interactive dashboard showing the number of IPS, CE, and SE cases statewide, their geographic distribution, and closure trends over time. The dashboard was presented at the March Collective meeting, where members shared feedback for future versions. Based on that input, the CEA began adding information on hours worked, wages

earned, and industry types for job placements. Working with IVRS, the team obtained vocational area and SOC code data to incorporate into the dashboard as these details became available.

Throughout the spring, the CEA led additional data management meetings focused on matching quality, youth transition data, and control group definitions. Control youth were defined as individuals ages 14–21 with MSD status to ensure comparability with participants in the transition pilot. As part of ongoing data cleaning, the CEA removed cases without service authorizations and corrected SE status for participants who received SE prior to DIF. The Year 3 Quarter 1 matching included 3,548 cases and resulted in 93 quality matches. Closure data showed that 29% of adults in CE, 33% of transition-aged youth in CE, and 50% of IPS participants achieved CIE, compared to 52% of adults and 30% of youth in the control group. These findings informed how the team will define comparison groups for future analyses, including upcoming IPS youth pilots.

Accessibility became a key focus mid-year. After meeting with a content expert from the Iowa Commission for the Blind in June to review JAWS and screen reader compatibility, the team identified features of the dashboard that were difficult to navigate for individuals with visual impairments. The CEA began creating alternative formats and plain-language summaries to accompany each dashboard release to improve accessibility and usability.

In August, the dashboard was updated with Year 3 Quarter 3 data. This version added narrative descriptions of intervention and control group participation, a tracker for IBC case openings, revised age calculations based on closure dates, and clearer group labels distinguishing Pre-ETS, SE, and transition cases. At the September data management meeting, the group discussed how to handle cases with \$0 billed services, planned but unauthorized services, and missing limitation data, and agreed to remove control data from the public dashboard to prevent confusion while continuing to review those data internally.

The updated dashboard, along with the accessible summary, was presented at the September Collective meeting and submitted to IVRS on September 30 for integration into the IBC website. Over the course of the year, these efforts improved data accuracy, clarified analytic methods, and expanded access to IBC data for both internal and public audiences.

#### ***Objectives 11.a–11.b (Annual Performance Reports)***

The CEA began drafting the 2025 APR in preparation for submission to IVRS for an initial review on 4/11/2025. The CEA will incorporate all feedback from the draft review into a final iteration that was submitted to RSA by 5/5/2025. On 4/29, VR confirmed that no revisions were needed to the draft submitted on 4/11/25. The final draft was submitted to RSA on 5/5/25.

#### ***Objectives 12.a–12.b (End-of-Year Annual Performance Reports)***

Submission of this report satisfies objective 12.a. The CEA will respond to any IVRS commentary or related inquiries received regarding this report (objective 12.b).

#### **Strategies/Key Outcomes. Describe the relationship between participants' and/or partners' engagement with or use of specific practices and strategies implemented by the project and key outcomes.**

Engagement with specific strategies and practices implemented through IBC has influenced both system-level and individual-level outcomes, as supported by feedback from participant



interviews, CRP interviews, and the 2025 stakeholder survey. One key strategy has been the use of the Collective as a statewide engagement mechanism to align efforts across partners and drive collective impact toward Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). Findings from the 2025 Stakeholder Survey demonstrate that this strategy has fostered shifts in how some stakeholders support CIE. Among Collective attendees who responded to the survey item (63), 30% reported feeling well informed about IBC progress, and 57% felt somewhat informed. Many respondents indicated increased advocacy for CIE (n = 19), adoption of new strategies (n = 13), and greater prioritization of CIE within their work (n = 9). Open-ended responses highlighted benefits such as strengthened relationships and partnerships, enhanced knowledge and capacity, and increased alignment around system change priorities. Collective discussions also supported development of registered apprenticeship competencies, refinement of DB101, and broader conversations around Medicaid–VR funding strategies—illustrating how engagement translates into practical, system-focused outcomes.

Survey responses from IBC VR Counselors show that most perceived positive impacts on job seekers' motivation to pursue CIE, and some saw positive impacts on caregivers' attitudes toward it. Out of 14 responses from IBC VR Counselors to the 2025 stakeholder survey, 57% noticed at least some positive impact on JCs' motivation to pursue CIE (slight: 4; moderate: 2; significant: 2), and 36% reported having noticed some positive impact on caregivers' mindsets about CIE (moderate: 4; significant: 1).

During interviews, IBC service recipients described specific factors that contributed to positive employment experiences. Career exploration and decision-making support were among the most frequently mentioned (CE: 4, IPS: 3). Interviewees shared that these activities helped them better understand different types of jobs and clarify their interests. For example, one IPS interviewee explained that exploring different types of workplaces broadened their view of available job options beyond their prior experience. Work experiences were also frequently discussed as positive (CE: 4, IPS: 3). Interviewees described liking opportunities to try new types of work, feeling a sense of belonging, earning wages, and experiencing pride in their work. One IPS interviewee expressed excitement about finding a job where they felt they truly belonged, describing it as “very exciting for me because I finally found a spot where I felt like I actually belonged.” Supportive relationships with employment specialists and job coaches were also identified as meaningful (CE: 4, IPS: 1). Interviewees described the encouragement they received and the positive, strength-based approach of their employment teams. One parent, for example, described their child's job coach as “phenomenal” and attributed their positive employment exploration experience to this support.

Provider engagement with IBC has also contributed to structural and organizational outcomes. Supervisors from three CRPs shared about how participating as an IBC pilot benefits their services. At one CRP, participating provided them with more opportunities to grow their IPS and CE programs and invest in staff. IBC provides funding reimbursement for hiring new staff and participating in technical training. Prior to participating in IBC, the IPS program at one of the CRPs had a waiting list due to staff overcapacity. The grant has allowed the CRP to hire more IPS staff and provided funding for staff to attend conferences. Furthermore, with the CE program, participation in IBC has shifted the CRP's focus from finding customers a job they could be successful in to finding employment opportunities that match their skillset and interests

through the Discovery Process. The grant has not affected the technical side of implementation because the agency has already been receiving support from staff at the University of Iowa Center for Excellence for Behavioral Health (CEBH). Another shared that as a result of participating in IBC, they now offer CE. While they would likely offer CE without IBC, the grant helped make it happen. Participation in IBC has also made the CRP re-focus on more intentional collaboration between employment and Day Hab by merging services under one leadership and provided a better direction for Day Hab and Employment Services to collaborate. Finally, a third CRP explained that since starting IPS in 2022, the program has been successful in placing their customers in employment. Many of their customers have entered back into the workforce and are doing well. Additionally, IBC provides funding for staff time typically non-billable under other Waiver services, such as time to attend meetings and write reports. This additional funding stream contributes to the CRP's successful IPS program.

**Input/Feedback. Explain how input and feedback from project participants and/or partners will be or are included in the evaluation of the project.**

Input and feedback from project participants and partners are embedded throughout the evaluation process to ensure that findings inform decision-making and reflect stakeholder perspectives. Evaluation findings are shared with IVRS to support strategic project decisions and with the Collective to keep partners informed about impact and progress.

CEA integrates both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data include program enrollment, demographic, and outcome data for each IBC service recipient, which are compared against outcomes for individuals receiving standard VR supported employment services. Using propensity score matching, CEA ensures the samples are comparable, allowing for stronger inferences about whether IBC has a greater impact on job seekers achieving CIE.

Quantitative data alone, however, do not capture participants' lived experiences or implementation dynamics. To address this, CEA collects qualitative feedback through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. This information helps identify how the project affects different stakeholders, which service strategies are most effective, and where improvements or adjustments may be needed to enhance impact over time.

Evaluation findings are shared through multiple channels to maximize accessibility and use. This includes biweekly local evaluation meetings, bimonthly Collective meetings, the data dashboard (for ongoing quantitative updates), infographics and written reports of evaluation activity findings (including the annual stakeholder survey, interviews, and focus groups), quarterly reports to IVRS, and monthly updates highlighting progress and successes. Beginning in 2025, these updates will also be disseminated to a broader group of IBC stakeholders through a monthly newsletter, ensuring timely and consistent communication of key findings and project activities.

**Adjustments/Improvements. Describe adjustments and improvements to the project resulting from data and results of the evaluation.**

Evaluation findings and stakeholder feedback directly informed key adjustments and improvements to the project during this reporting period. For example, IBC contract holders are collaborating on the development of a monthly stakeholder newsletter because feedback from the 2025 stakeholder survey indicated that many Collective members did not feel adequately

informed about project activities, progress, and data collection efforts. These monthly newsletters will help strengthen transparency, increase engagement, and support more consistent communication among all partners.

Evaluation findings and stakeholder feedback have also guided targeted improvements to data management systems. Results from the 2024 Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC) Stakeholder Survey indicated that both IVRS counselors and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) identified the need for stronger coordination and communication to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of IBC-related services. In response, IVRS is leveraging SWTCIE DIF funds to replace its outdated case management system (CMS) with a modern, cloud-based platform that better supports current service delivery needs. To achieve this, IVRS has contracted with Libera to implement the inFormed CMS.

Implementation will occur in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on launching a vendor portal to streamline the exchange of authorizations, billing, and supporting documentation. The new system is designed to strengthen communication, support secure information sharing, and automate routine processes to improve overall productivity for both IVRS staff and CRP partners. Progress to date includes a project kickoff meeting in August, access to a Beta environment for demonstrations and testing, and ongoing weekly meetings to finalize system requirements and data migration field mapping. Once these steps are complete, Libera will begin system development and configuration, with regular progress updates provided to IVRS throughout the process.

Phase 1 is targeted to go live in October 2026. In preparation, IVRS staff have begun accessing Libera's learning academy content to build familiarity with system functionality. Progress updates will continue to be communicated through upcoming newsletters.

Finally, in addition to implementing a new CMS, IBC has offered additional training for counselors on how to accurately enter IBC data into IRSS as a way to address data entry errors identified during ongoing monitoring. These trainings are designed to improve consistency in reporting, enhance the accuracy of service tracking, and ensure that data collected through IRSS fully reflects program activities. Together, these adjustments strengthen both the operational and evaluative capacity of the project, ensuring that findings can be more effectively used to guide decision-making and continuous improvement.

***d) Anticipated Activities, Outputs, Products, and Outcomes***

There are no major Y3 project evaluation activities that were not fulfilled during the reporting period.

***e) Challenges, Opportunities, and Emerging Issues: Describe the major challenges, opportunities, and emerging issues encountered during the reporting period, and the strategies developed to address these, if applicable.***

During the reporting period, a few challenges emerged that informed the design of participant data collection, strengthened project operations for accurate service tracking, and highlighted opportunities to improve inclusivity in both program participation and access to project data.

One challenge involved conducting participant interviews with individuals who were incarcerated. Early in the outreach process, the evaluation team recognized that excluding these

individuals would not only limit the sample but also omit important insights from a population disproportionately impacted by mental and behavioral health conditions. In collaboration with the Department of Corrections, jail administrators, and university shared services, the team revised data collection protocols to enable interviews with incarcerated participants. This required identifying appropriate communication platforms, coordinating logistics, and establishing funding for call minutes.

Data tracking also presented challenges. The CEA identified inconsistencies in participant groupings within the DIF report in IRSS, including instances where participants were misclassified or control group members appeared to have received intervention services. To address this, CEA collaborated with IVRS to investigate and correct these discrepancies, and IVRS implemented additional staff training and revised protocols to improve future data accuracy and consistency.

To further clarify how to report the number of IBC service recipients and employment outcomes, the evaluation team worked with IVRS to compile a set of technical questions about DIF tracking and submitted them to RSA. The questions addressed whether participants listed in DIF data who never received DIF-funded services should be counted, whether Status 22 should count as a successful employment outcome if the case remains open, and how to apply the updated contemplator definition. RSA acknowledged the relevance of these questions across grantees and committed to providing formal guidance. In parallel, Mathematica (which the team consulted to guide future collection) provided targeted feedback:

- On defining outcomes, Mathematica noted that SWTCIE grantees use somewhat different methods to track successful employment. The national evaluation will ask each grantee for the number of participants who achieved sustained/stable CIE (counting each person once even if they later lose and regain employment) and recommended measuring an employment “spell” in months rather than days or weeks. Mathematica emphasized prioritizing accurate future reporting over amending past reports.
- On the contemplator definition, Mathematica clarified that SMW contemplators are those who have never previously received subminimum wage (SMW). If a participant has ever worked for SMW before project enrollment, they belong in the SMW recipient group. The updated definitions were intended to create consistent guidance and were not designed to expand eligibility or change the status of closed cases.

Following Mathematica’s guidance, CEA and IVRS are using a contemplator definition consistent with prior practice while making explicit how it applies across subgroups:

- Adults in SMW are counted as those currently in subminimum wage employment.
- Adult “contemplators” are individuals who are not currently in SMW but are in day habilitation and/or receiving case management without a focus on employment.
- Youth “contemplators” are people age 24 or under who receive SSA benefits or who receive/received Level III services while in secondary school.

As part of ongoing data monitoring, the team is taking steps to prevent double-counting, ensure consistency in contemplator categorization, and distinguish between individuals who have IBC service authorizations and those who actually received billed services. For the national reports to

Mathematica and RSA, the project is reporting all individuals with IBC service authorizations in the counts, consistent with RSA expectations. For the local evaluation analyses comparing IBC service recipients to the IVRS-supported employment control group, CEA is limiting outcome analyses to individuals with billed services. These dual approaches preserve alignment with RSA reporting while maintaining analytical rigor for local evaluation.

Finally, accessibility of the data dashboard was a challenge that the evaluation team worked to address. To ensure equitable access, the CEA consulted with the University of Iowa Health Care's Center for Disabilities and Development to review screen reader compatibility, particularly with JAWS software. Based on this review, the team developed a landing page that included alt text for all images and buttons and created an accessible summary infographic that states key data dashboard findings in plain language. These enhancements were presented to the Collective in September 2025 and provide an important tool for stakeholders with visual impairments or other accessibility needs.

### **3.2. Work Plan**

#### ***a) Updated Year 4 Work Plan***

The Evaluation Scope of Work guides evaluation activities for the duration of the IBC project. The scope of work specifies general activities and timelines (broken down by year) that the evaluation team, hereafter referred to as Contractor, will fulfill. This allows the evaluation plan to be adaptive based on the emergent project and stakeholder needs. Table 1, however, provides additional detail about the nuances of each planned activity broken down by month. Both the Evaluation Scope of Work and the Evaluation Timeline (Table 1) are included below, with the Evaluation Scope of Work appearing first followed by the Evaluation Timeline.

#### **Meetings (Years 1 – 5)**

- a. Contractor will attend monthly meetings with program leadership to share findings and collaborate on upcoming research and evaluation activities.
- b. Throughout the evaluation process, Contractor will seek guidance/feedback and regularly communicate with the program leadership team. Regular communication over the duration of the grant will inform ongoing continuous improvement of the program.

#### **Annual Contractor Convening (Years 2–5)**

- a. Contractor will travel to Iowa to present fiscal year evaluation progress, findings, and the workplan for the next fiscal year.
- b. Contractor will respond to stakeholder inquiries and provide resources as requested.

#### **Stakeholder Survey (Years 1 – 4)**

1. Contractor will create a survey draft for key project roles in Qualtrics to understand barriers and facilitators to implementation.
  - i. VR Counselors
  - ii. Mentors
    1. CEBH IPS Fidelity mentors
    2. GHA CE Fidelity mentors
  - iii. Collective attendees
  - iv. CRPs
    1. Supervisors



## 2. Directors

- v. Employment Specialists
  - vi. Educators
  - vii. Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Participants
  - viii. If applicable (timeline pending RA implementation)
2. Contractor will revise survey based on IVRS feedback of preliminary draft.
  3. Contractor will Disseminate the survey to contact list (to be provided by IVRS staff and project staff).
  4. Contractor will provide three follow-up reminders to survey recipients to increase survey completion and participation rates.
  5. Contractor will analyze survey data.
  6. Contractor will prepare a written report and infographic summarizing survey findings for IVRS.
  7. Contractor will respond to IVRS commentary and inquiries related to the submitted report.
  8. Contractor will present survey findings to the VR Leadership Team, the Collective, or other requested leadership teams to advise on continued program implementation.

### **Case Study (Years 3 and 4)**

- a. In year 4, Contractor will continue to work with IVRS to identify exemplary pilot sites for case studies in year 4.
- b. Contractor will conduct in-depth Case studies of IPS and CE services provided by pilot sites to begin to create a template for program replication.
- c. Contractor will prepare a summary of the case study findings that highlights alignment with playbook/Blueprint development.

### **Annual Blueprints (Years 3–5)**

- a. Contractor will create annual blueprints for major contract holders and project roles that focus on service delivery strategies and tools that emerge each fiscal year.
  - i. Creation of blueprints will be informed by interviews, meetings with stakeholders, document analyses, and annual evaluation deliverables.
- b. Contractor will respond to IVRS commentary and inquiries related to the deliverable.
- c. Contractor will submit final deliverables annually to IVRS by September 30.

### **Propensity Score Analysis (Years 2 – 5)**

- a. Contractor will facilitate monthly data management meetings with IVRS to monitor data collection and mediate challenges.
- b. Contractor will conduct an annual data review in years 2 and 3 and semiannual data reviews in years 4 and 5.
- c. In year 5, Contractor will conduct a propensity score analysis of data collected during project implementation years 2 – 5.
- d. Contractor will report findings to IVRS as a written report.

### **End-of-Year Reports (EOYR) (Years 1 – 5)**

- a. Contractor will develop a written report for the end-of-year performance report (October 1- September 30) to be shared with program leadership and RSA. The evaluation data

will be made available to third-party researchers and the results of the evaluation will be provided through formal and informal mechanisms.

- b. Contractor will respond to IVRS commentary or inquiries related to the submitted report.



Table 1. FFY2025 Evaluation Timeline

Month	Primary Tasks	Subtasks
October 2025	Y2Q4 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit final report</li> </ul>
	EOYAPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> <li>• Submit report to Project Director</li> <li>• Respond to any VR comments</li> </ul>
	IBC Contract Team Convening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prep presentation</li> </ul>
	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop approach and design</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Develop plans for data collection</li> <li>• Develop data collection instruments</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
November 2025	IBC Contract Team Convening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present FFY 2025 evaluation findings and upcoming FFY26 evaluation activities</li> </ul>
	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop approach and design</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>

December 2025	Y3Q1 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> </ul>
	Data Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review quarterly IBC outcome and enrollment data</li> <li>• Clean data</li> <li>• Update data dashboard</li> <li>• Present during data management meeting and/or Collective meeting</li> </ul>
	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect data and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
January 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Y3Q1 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit report</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Data Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review quarterly IBC outcome and enrollment data</li> <li>• Clean data</li> <li>• Update data dashboard</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
February 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect data and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Data Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct propensity score matching</li> <li>• Present during data management meeting and/or Collective meeting</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
March 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Deliver first case study deliverable drafts for VR review</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Submit first Blueprint draft for VR review</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Y3Q2 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> </ul>

	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
April 2026	Y3Q2 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit report</li> </ul>
	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
May 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather stakeholder input to inform Blueprint development</li> <li>• Collect and analyze data as applicable</li> <li>• Develop Blueprint materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
June 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>

	2026 Annual Stakeholder Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise survey items</li> <li>• Seek key informant input</li> <li>• Prepare survey link</li> <li>• Conduct internal pilot</li> </ul>
	Y3Q3 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> </ul>
	Data Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review quarterly IBC outcome and enrollment data</li> <li>• Clean data</li> <li>• Update data dashboard</li> <li>• Conduct propensity score matching</li> <li>• Present during data management meeting and/or Collective meeting</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Micro Blueprints</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
July 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data</li> <li>• Develop Case Studies materials</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	2026 Annual Stakeholder Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct pilot with IVRS contract team</li> <li>• Finalize survey items</li> <li>• Administer survey link</li> <li>• Send reminder emails</li> </ul>
	Y3Q3 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit final report</li> </ul>

	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Micro Blueprints</li> <li>• Provide updates to VR</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
August 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare final deliverables</li> <li>• Obtain VR feedback on deliverables</li> <li>• Integrate feedback into final deliverables</li> </ul>
	Y3Q4 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> </ul>
	2026 Stakeholder Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send survey reminders</li> <li>• Close survey</li> <li>• Analyze survey</li> <li>• Begin report template</li> <li>• Begin infographic template</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit blueprint draft to VR for feedback</li> <li>• Seek stakeholder feedback</li> <li>• Integrate feedback into final blueprint</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>
September 2026	Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit final deliverables to VR</li> </ul>
	Data Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review quarterly IBC outcome and enrollment data</li> <li>• Clean data</li> <li>• Update data dashboard</li> <li>• Conduct propensity score matching</li> <li>• Present during data management meeting and/or Collective meeting</li> </ul>

	2026 Stakeholder Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare written report</li> <li>• Prepare infographic</li> <li>• CEA team review</li> <li>• Submit written report to VR</li> <li>• Submit infographic to VR</li> </ul>
	EOYAPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> </ul>
	Y3Q4 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit final report</li> </ul>
	Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit final Blueprint</li> <li>• Present to IVRS and the Collective</li> </ul>
	Monthly Evaluation Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to project directors</li> </ul>
	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Newsletter</li> <li>• Send to VR for Review</li> <li>• Disseminate to Collective</li> </ul>

***b & c) Changes to Goals and Objective & Grant Application Goal Analysis***

All project goals and objectives referencing evaluation have remained unchanged since the modifications implemented in Year 2, as outlined in the 2024 APR. Table 2 presents all evaluation-related project objectives along with progress status updates.



Table 2. Changes to Project and Evaluation Objectives

<b>Project Objectives<sup>2</sup></b>		
<b>Objective 1:</b> Establish and engage a coalition of diverse stakeholders to develop, pilot, refine, and implement collaborative systems change models that support Iowans with disabilities who are employed or contemplating employment at subminimum wage to move into competitive integrated employment.		
<b>Objective 2.</b> Utilize the U.S. Department of Labor’s recognized Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and pre-apprenticeship (PA) programs as a model to recruit, train, and retain interested Iowans with disabilities into CIE.		
<b>Objective 3.</b> Increase ongoing delivery of preparation, placement and support services that begin in early high school and result in uninterrupted transition to CIE for youth with disabilities.		
<b>Objective 4.</b> Facilitate an increase in Iowans with disabilities with obtaining and maintaining CIE that leads to economic security.		
<b>Objective 5.</b> Increase expectation and demand for CIE for all Iowans with disabilities.		
<b>Objective 6.</b> Align public policies, funding, and practices that support CIE as the first and preferred outcome for all Iowans with disabilities.		
<b>Original Objective Activities</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
<b>1.12; 2.9; 3.14; 4.16; 5.6; 6.9</b>	Provide recommendations for project implementation based on stakeholder feedback via reports and presentations of evaluation data.	<b>Recommendations from Participant Interviews:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Ensure Consistent Access to Employment Specialists</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants in both IPS and CE programs reported limited availability of employment specialists.</li> <li>Recommendation: Increase staffing or restructure caseloads to allow for more frequent and personalized contact, including on-the-job support for CE participants.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b><i>Address Transportation Barriers</i></b></li> </ol>

<sup>2</sup> These objectives are based on revisions made to Y2 objectives during the Y3 Contractor Convening.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation challenges were mentioned by IPS and CE service recipients.</li> <li>• Recommendation: Offer travel training, explore partnerships with local transit providers, and consider transportation stipends or coordinated ride services.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. <i>Provide Structured On-the-Job Supports for CE Participants</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were CE participants who shared that they would benefit from tools like visual schedules, checklists, and modeling.</li> <li>• Recommendation: Train employment specialists in using structured supports and ensure these tools are customized and consistently available on the job.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations from CRP Interviews/Focus Groups to Increase or Foster Collaboration Between Day Hab and Employment Services:</b></p> <p><b>1. <i>Recommendations for VR</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance Day Hab staff understanding of VR services and IBC</li> <li>• Designate a staff person to oversee agency payments and reduce funding delays</li> <li>• Improve communication with CRPs, particularly on referrals</li> </ul> <p><b>2. <i>Recommendations for CRPs</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove barriers for direct communication and collaboration between Day Hab staff and Employment Specialists</li> <li>• Cross train all staff in different services</li> <li>• Invest in staff wages for cross-trained staff</li> <li>• Build and strengthen partnerships with local businesses</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with local transportation agencies to address transportation issues Incorporate job simulation activities for JCs to practice skills in different job types</li> <li>• Combine skill development sessions with authentic engagement in the community to practice the skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations from 2025 Annual Stakeholder Survey:</b></p> <p><b><i>1. Improve Communication and Transparency</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many stakeholders felt only “somewhat informed” about project progress and desired clearer updates.</li> <li>• Recommendations:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Revive the IBC newsletter</li> <li>○ Share updates on grant activities and outcomes</li> <li>○ Clarify how funds are used and what progress has been made</li> <li>○ Balance meeting content for both new and experienced participants</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><i>2. Consider Workgroup Opportunities</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most (30 out of 61) Collective attendees who responded to the 2025 stakeholder survey were unsure about whether workgroups should be revived. However, 26 respondents suggested topics or focus points that they would like to see the Collective cover. Many respondents listed multiple topics, so the frequencies of suggested topics below exceed 26:</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collaboration and Engagement (n =11)</li> <li>○ Policy, Advocacy, and Systems Change (n = 9)</li> <li>○ Youth and Education (n = 9)</li> <li>○ Employment Models and Practices (n = 8)</li> <li>○ Funding and Benefits (n = 4)</li> </ul>
<b>1.13</b>	Baseline data will be collected prior to the start of the project, and ongoing evaluation data collection will be utilized for assessing project outcomes.	<p>Baseline data were collected before the start of the project in Y1. Pre-implementation surveys were administered to GHA mentors, VR counselors, VR counselor specialists, and UCEDD coordinators, and focus groups were facilitated with CRP supervisors to assess project readiness, role clarity, early needs, and anticipations for the project.</p> <p>Ongoing or anticipated data collection includes annual stakeholder surveys, case studies, and collection and monitoring of participant demographics and outcome data.</p>
<b>1.14, 2.10, 3.15, 4.17, 5.7, 6.10</b>	Collect information, resources, tools, and output data specified in the project logic model and project status chart for model replication and disseminate at federal, state, and local levels.	<p><b>Data monitoring</b></p> <p>Data collection on project participants in control and intervention groups continued in Year 4. Variables tracked include disability type (intellectual or developmental), presence of a mental health diagnosis, age at DIF enrollment, age, gender, county, functional limitations, Day Habilitation enrollment, race, ethnicity, race, ethnicity, outcome (whether they transitioned to CIE), program participation (supported employment, IPS, or CE), and group membership (control group or intervention group). Continued data collection and monitoring will occur during Years 2–5.</p>

		<p><b>Day Hab Micro Blueprint</b></p> <p>The CEA developed a Micro Blueprint to guide collaboration between employment services and Day Hab services. Formalized collaboration between services can lead to further expansion of CIE opportunities by serving as an additional referral source for employment services.</p> <p><b>RA Enrollment</b></p> <p>IVRS shares RA enrollment updates with the CEA during local evaluation meetings. To date, one person is enrolled in the RA program.</p>
<b>3.10</b>	<p>Establish and engage a secondary transition-focused workgroup of diverse partners that will assist with youth pilot project development, refinement, evaluation, and implementation (yr. 1 Q3–Q4), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing current resources, training and practices related to supporting students with CIE (yrs. 2–5)</li> <li>Identifying opportunities for embedding best practice CIE within the Iowa Department of Education’s Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) (yrs. 2–5).</li> <li>Identify promising and emerging life skill practices and resources to assess and build participants’ ability to manage life skills areas and help inform the toolkit (yrs. 2–5).</li> </ul> <p>Identify and define critical elements, components, and parameters for replication (yr. 5).</p>	<p>In Y2, the transition workgroup supported the launch of a Call for Interest for two youth pilot projects. The call was shared widely with Collective members and stakeholders, with targeted outreach to LEAs and CRPs. Listening sessions and Q&amp;A opportunities were held, and applications were due January 31, 2024. The workgroup developed scoring criteria, reviewed proposals, and selected Linn-Mar and Waterloo Community School Districts for the pilot awards. Following the selection, youth transition services began in both districts. While Collective workgroups—including the transition workgroup—dissolved in Y3 after major milestones like RA program development and the establishment of transition services, transition efforts continued to be led by the IVRS contract team. In Y4, IVRS is collaborating with transition pilot sites to define appropriate transition program criteria for each district to address barriers related to limited providers in their areas and to inform a toolkit for transition services. Future annual stakeholder surveys will include</p>

		transition roles to assess barriers, needs, and facilitators to successful CIE among transition-aged students.
<b>3.11</b>	Evaluate demonstration sites for critical core components and consider potential scale-up components and local context features for adaptation to new environments and refine model for replication (yrs. 2–5).	The annual stakeholder surveys (VR counselors, VR counselor specialists, GHA mentors, employment specialists, Collective attendees, and soon, IPS fidelity mentors) and participant interviews help evaluate IBC demonstration sites, identifying core components and potential scale-up elements. Stakeholder feedback assesses program effectiveness, including barriers experienced at various project stages, emergent needs, and effective localized approaches that can be used to inform broader recommendations. Meanwhile, participant insights offer firsthand experiences that can be used to understand project impact and areas for improvement.

### 3.3 Budget

As provided in our budget estimate for Year 3 including the supplemental budget, our main evaluator (Kayla Pfau) spent 75% of her time on this project from October – April and 100% effort May-September. Our evaluator (Asih Asikin-Garmager) spent 100% of her time on this project May through September. Our oversight evaluator (Liz Hollingworth) spent 1% of her time on this project. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> evaluator (Erica Kaldenberg) put forth 1.5 months of her budgeted effort for the fiscal year. There were two graduate assistants during the quarter who spent 50% effort (20 hours/week) on this project throughout the academic year and 25% effort (10 hours/week) in June & July. Current budgeted expenditures are salaries of \$166,326, fringes of \$57,057, travel expenses of \$1,712, tuition and fees of \$29,029, and indirect costs of \$124,927 total budgeted cost of \$379,051.

Total expenditures for the 3rd project year ending 9/30/25 were \$377,573.96, leaving \$1,477.04 remaining in the budget.

#### a) Unobligated funds

If you have unobligated funds from the reporting period, you are required to provide information about the unobligated funds and the impacts to the project activities, at a minimum:

The total unobligated funds as of 9/30/25 were \$1,477.04. This was due to prorating tuition and fees based on academic years not coinciding with project years, indirect costs not fully expensed, as well as budget for travel not being fully expensed in this project year. As part of the Y3

supplement, the budget for participant interviews included travel from Iowa City to areas in Eastern Iowa to accommodate in-person interviews if needed (\$72 budgeted), as well as travel from Florida (where the lead local evaluator lives) to portions of Western Iowa (\$1,310 budgeted), as needed. Only two interview participants preferred in-person accommodations. Both participants resided in Eastern Iowa. Therefore, \$84 (\$35 for trip 1 and \$49 for trip 2) were used for gas reimbursement for our Iowa-based evaluator to travel to the interviewees. No travel to Western Iowa from Florida was used, leaving \$1,382 in unobligated Y3 travel funds. Of these funds, a portion was reallocated towards incentive costs for interview participation, totaling \$368.30. Table 3 breaks down these personnel costs from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025 and the corresponding surplus.

Table 3. Personnel costs breakdown from October 1, 2025–September 30, 2025.

Budget Line Items	Amount Approved for Year	Funds Expended	Funds Obligated
1. Personnel	\$166,326	\$166,882.64	\$(556.64)
2. Fringe Benefits	\$57,057	\$56,627.70	\$429.30
3. Travel	\$1,712	\$84	\$1,628
4. Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0
5. Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0
6. Contractual	\$0	\$0	\$0
7. Construction	\$0	\$0	\$0
8. Other	\$0	\$368.30	\$(368.30)
9. Total Direct Costs	\$225,095	\$223,962.64	\$1,132.36
10. Indirect Costs	\$124,927	\$124,299.26	\$627.74
11. Training Stipends and Tuition	\$29,029	\$29,312.06	\$(283.06)
Total	\$379,051	\$377,573.96	\$1,477.04